viduals, agencies or companies, but very few resources left for the future. The answers for today must not mean desolation for tomorrow.

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Who will garrison the fortress? A reply to Spinage

It would be easy to dismiss Spinage's polemic (*Oryx*, **32** [4], 267–278) as the last gasp of the conservation old guard, which seeks to discredit new participatory models of conservation by tarring them as 'neopopulist', 'Marxist' and 'left-wing'. After all, the main international conservation agencies have already distanced themselves from the classical conservation model, which seeks to establish protected areas by clearing them of resident human populations. For example, in May 1996, after several years of dialogue with indigenous peoples' organizations, the World Wide Fund for Nature (International) adopted a new policy on indigenous peoples and conservation, which – in line with existing and emerging principles of international law – explicitly recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples to the use, ownership and control of their traditional territories, approves the current draft of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and emphasizes the principle of free and informed consent in all interactions between indigenous peoples and conservation organizations (WWF, 1996).

In a similar spirit, the General Assembly of the IUCN – the World Conservation Union, at its meeting in Montreal in November 1996, approved several resolutions that refer to indigenous peoples and protected areas. The resolutions provide guidelines for the secretariat and members of the IUCN, stating not only that they should recognize the rights of indigenous peoples in protected areas but also that the personnel and members of the IUCN should contribute to indigenous initiatives in intergovernmental fora such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, which itself makes provisions for securing customary rights. The IUCN resolutions propose that the rights of indigenous peoples in protected areas should be respected and that conservation policies should be compatible with the current draft of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As a step towards the promotion of these new models for conservation, the IUCN has likewise revised its set of definitions of types of conservation areas, recognizing that protected areas need not only be managed and controlled by state agencies, but should include other types owned and managed by non-governmental agencies, private companies, individuals, local communities and indigenous peoples. To accommodate the economic activities of resident peoples, the WWF and IUCN now give particular emphasis to the need to increase the number of protected areas in the IUCN's Categories V, 'Protected Landscapes/Seascapes', and VI, 'Managed Resource Protected Areas'. The IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas is currently engaged in an internal review to see how it can best put these new principles into effect, given that in many countries national protected-area legislation, developed during the heyday of the 'classical' conservation model, does not contemplate non-state institutions managing, owning, controlling or using protected areas (WWF/IUCN, 1997).

These changes within the conservation agencies' thinking reflect a growing sophistication in their understanding of the relationship between protected areas and the civil societies within which they are embedded. Increasing pressures on natural resources surrounding protected areas throws into doubt the long-term sustainability of the areas themselves if local communities resent their existence. Protected-area managers in the field have recognized that parks become management nightmares if local people neither benefit

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from them nor have a say in decision-making. Indigenous peoples, once unable to articulate their own concerns because of their cultural and political marginalization, are now increasingly able to assert their rights to own and control the lands and environments they have customarily relied on. Meanwhile, as pressure increases globally on natural resources, the government bureaucracies that used to be able to defend protected areas from other outside interests are increasingly prey to political manipulation and predatory private companies. Under these changing circumstances new alliances with local peoples who also resist these outside pressures are not only ethically preferable but may also make conservation sense.

These welcome changes in the policies of the conservation organizations, while resisted by elements such as Spinage, must be seen as only the first steps on a long road to achieving more viable long-term relations between human beings and their natural environments. The recognition of indigenous peoples' rights to own and manage their ancestral lands does not automatically mean that sustainable land use will result (as many of the authors that Spinage criticizes have emphasized). On the contrary, as a recent conference between indigenous peoples and conservationists in Latin America highlighted, indigenous peoples are fully aware that the integrity of their territories is now at risk not just because of external pressures to exploit their areas, which they seek to resist, but also because their own economies are undergoing change. They seek help from conservationists to address these problems, as partners in promoting change rather than as controllers of their lives (Gray *et al.*, 1998). As the International Alliance of Indigenous-Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests notes:

> *Indigenous peoples recognize that it is in their long-term interest to use their resources sustainably and respect the need for environmental conservation. Indigenous peoples recognize that the expertise of conservation organizations can be of use to their self-development and seek a mutually beneficial relationship based on trust, transparency and accountability*
> (International Alliance 1996: 144).

Spinage's reluctance to embrace such participatory approaches to conservation appears to be predicated on three underlying preconceptions. In the first place he seems unable to recognize that conservation is a cultural process. Indeed, he is so blind to the fact that conservationists are social actors that he can ask, 'does there have to be a social purpose?' for establishing a protected area – as if protected areas somehow created themselves without the intervention of human agencies with their own ideas, interests, institutions, legislation and objectives. Yet it is clear from Spinage's unreflective discourse that he does have a social purpose in mind. Behind his no doubt real concern for biodiversity conservation, he gives unquestioning priority to the interests of wildlife tourists who 'soon complained' about ugly fishing villages in the Queen Elizabeth National Park and for whom the uniquely rich fauna of African national parks 'is the attraction'. The question that Spinage cannot even ask, it seems, is: why are foreign tourists given priority over African residents?

Spinage is equally reluctant to see conservation as a political process. Yet the unstated assumption in his article is that depopulated 'fortress' protected areas *can* be defended, but the reader is left less clear *who* these defenders will be. The classical conservation model relies on the bureaucratic power of government agencies, backed where necessary with the firepower of modern weaponry, to exclude people from access contrary to imposed rules. That these impositions may constitute violations of international law and internationally agreed human rights standards is apparently justified by the higher purpose of securing biodiversity according to his culturally informed perception of natural law: 'in nature there is only one law of possession and that is the law of occupation by force'. Leaving aside the questionable morality of this approach, the question arises: for how long can such politically isolated and socially beleaguered protected areas survive? The 'fortress' model of conservation, which Spinage supports, relies

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on urban bureaucrats and park rangers to defend areas otherwise emptied of human inhabitants, even though the long-term allegiance of these sparse garrisons may be in doubt. In contrast, the new, participatory model seeks to help local communities to garrison their own territories, supplementing local and customary political institutions with the force of law, and the support of government agencies and conservation organizations.

Spinage appears to have no confidence in such an approach because of his evident misanthropy. In Spinage's modern world, apparently all human beings (except perhaps bureaucrats and tourists) constitute a threat to nature due to the dual problems of 'population increase' and the adoption of new technologies. His undifferentiated 'technocratic man' offers conservationists no allies and little hope. Creating protected areas may, he admits, imply displacing indigenous peoples from their territories (he laconically notes in an aside 'where else could they [protected areas] be established?'). But is Spinage right in assuming that the peoples inside the areas that are now thought suitable for protected-area status are as much a threat to these areas as those who live outside them? Spinage dismisses the notion that the very fact that these areas seem to conservationists to be worth conserving suggests that the local peoples may have different relations to their environment to those in surrounding areas. However, Spinage is not even consistent. In his eyes, the inevitability of population increase disqualifies people from a right to control and manage their customary lands, but even where the indigenous people's numbers are very small, like the 500 traditional hunters in the vast expanse of Tsavo, he scoffs at the idea that their customary rights should be recognized.

Despite the hostile tone and questionable underpinnings, Spinage's article does also raise some important questions. He is right to highlight the complexity of relations between human populations and their natural environment, and right to emphasize that many indigenous societies are also undergoing rapid social and economic change. These are the very problems to which many indigenous peoples themselves are seeking solutions. In trying to help provide answers, however, ecologists should be careful not to exaggerate the extent of their own knowledge. Recent research in Africa shows how often scientists completely misread the relations between peoples and their environments, to the point where people who create forests around their communities in savannah areas are portrayed as agents of deforestation invading the last remaining forest islands in the way of an advancing agricultural frontier (Fairhead and Leach, 1996, 1998; Leach and Mearns, 1996).

The 'new model' of conservation results from conservationists and others being more self-questioning about their motives and the extent of their knowledge. Who is conservation to benefit? Who is best placed to manage 'protected areas' in the long term? What are the best means of re-establishing sustainable relationships between humans and their environments? A raft of new publications shows how conservationists and social development institutions are actively seeking answers to these questions and seek to complement the insights of indigenous knowledge with western science (Western and Wright, 1994; McNeely, 1995; Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996; Kothari, Singh and Suri, 1996; Redford and Mansour, 1996; Poffenberger and McGean, 1996; Buchi *et al.*, 1997; Hitchcock, 1997; IUCN, 1997; Stevens, 1997). For my part, I don't think that western scientists have all the answers. Some of them aren't even asking the right questions.

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